

## § 1977.2

through their representatives, at every level of safety and health activity.

(d) This part deals essentially with the rights of employees afforded under section 11(c) of the Act. Section 11(c) of the Act prohibits reprisals, in any form, against employees who exercise rights under the Act.

### § 1977.2 Purpose of this part.

The purpose of this part is to make available in one place interpretations of the various provisions of section 11(c) of the Act which will guide the Secretary of Labor in the performance of his duties thereunder unless and until otherwise directed by authoritative decisions of the courts, or concluding, upon reexamination of an interpretation, that it is incorrect.

### § 1977.3 General requirements of section 11(c) of the Act.

Section 11(c) provides in general that no person shall discharge or in any manner discriminate against any employee because the employee has:

(a) Filed any complaint under or related to the Act;

(b) Instituted or caused to be instituted any proceeding under or related to the Act;

(c) Testified or is about to testify in any proceeding under the Act or related to the Act; or

(d) Exercised on his own behalf or on behalf of others any right afforded by the Act.

Any employee who believes that he has been discriminated against in violation of section 11(c) of the Act may, within 30 days after such violation occurs, lodge a complaint with the Secretary of Labor alleging such violation. The Secretary shall then cause appropriate investigation to be made. If, as a result of such investigation, the Secretary determines that the provisions of section 11(c) have been violated civil action may be instituted in any appropriate United States district court, to restrain violations of section 11(c)(1) and to obtain other appropriate relief, including rehiring or reinstatement of the employee to his former position with back pay. Section 11(c) further provides for notification of complainants by the Secretary of determina-

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tions made pursuant to their complaints.

### § 1977.4 Persons prohibited from discriminating.

Section 11(c) specifically states that “no person shall discharge or in any manner discriminate against any employee” because the employee has exercised rights under the Act. Section 3(4) of the Act defines “person” as “one or more individuals, partnerships, associations, corporations, business trusts, legal representatives, or any group of persons.” Consequently, the prohibitions of section 11(c) are not limited to actions taken by employers against their own employees. A person may be chargeable with discriminatory action against an employee of another person. Section 11(c) would extend to such entities as organizations representing employees for collective bargaining purposes, employment agencies, or any other person in a position to discriminate against an employee. See, *Meek v. United States*, 136 F. 2d 679 (6th Cir., 1943); *Bowe v. Judson C. Burns*, 137 F. 2d 37 (3rd Cir., 1943).

### § 1977.5 Persons protected by section 11(c).

(a) All employees are afforded the full protection of section 11(c). For purposes of the Act, an employee is defined as “an employee of an employer who is employed in a business of his employer which affects commerce.” The Act does not define the term “employ.” However, the broad remedial nature of this legislation demonstrates a clear congressional intent that the existence of an employment relationship, for purposes of section 11(c), is to be based upon economic realities rather than upon common law doctrines and concepts. See, *U.S. v. Silk*, 331 U.S. 704 (1947); *Rutherford Food Corporation v. McComb*, 331 U.S. 722 (1947).

(b) For purposes of section 11(c), even an applicant for employment could be considered an employee. See, *NLRB v. Lamar Creamery*, 246 F. 2d 8 (5th Cir., 1957). Further, because section 11(c) speaks in terms of any employee, it is also clear that the employee need not be an employee of the discriminator. The principal consideration would be